

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ALMATY 003919

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KZ](#) [POLITICAL](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ROUNDUP,
OCTOBER 31

REF: Almaty 3861

1. (U) This is the sixth in a series of weekly election roundups, in advance of Kazakhstan's December 4, 2005 presidential elections. Items were drawn primarily from the local press and media.

Commitments to Free and Fair Elections

2. (SBU) OSCE Ambassador Julie Finley raised the importance of free and fair presidential elections during her October 27 visit to Astana. Presidential Administration Deputy Tazhin maintained that all candidates will have equal access to the media, including the two government-controlled channels. Central Elections Commission Chairman Zhumabekov pointed out that the CEC will monitor media access to ensure a level-playing field. Security Council Chairman Utemuratov said that President Nazarbayev had authorized him to meet with local officials to deliver the message that any falsification of election results would result in severe administrative punishment. Opposition leaders have been invited to consult independently with the akims. Senate Chairman Abykayev echoed that word had gone out to the akims to steer clear of "over-fulfilling" the plan, i.e. pumping up the President's vote count. Foreign Minister Tokayev noted that Kazakhstan was taking the elections "very seriously" and had taken a "huge" step forward since the 1999 presidential elections. Unlike the previous election, President Nazarbayev faced credible opposition candidates.

Registration is Over

3. (U) Registration of candidates for the presidency ended on October 24. On October 25, the Central Election Commission (CEC) announced that the registered candidates were Nursultan Nazarbayev, Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, Alikhan Baimenov, Yerasyil Abylkasymov and Mels Yeleusizov. Eight other contenders failed to collect the required number of signatures in their support.

4. (U) On October 26, the CEC approved the text of the ballot. The names of candidates will be listed in alphabetical order.

5. (U) The CEC has reported numerous violations of electoral legislation during the signature collection campaign: signatures were collected under the pretext of conducting a census and checking voters' lists; signature forms lacked passport data; some signatures were not authentic; some signatures were collected from persons under the legal age; some signatures belonged to the dead or people who emigrated. According to the CEC, every candidate submitted a certain number of signatures that were found invalid:

Nazarbayev:	641,	or 0.38%;
Tuyakbay:	16,236,	or 13.55%;
Baimenov:	23,486,	or 18.36%;
Abylkasymov:	10,925,	or 10.21%;
Yeleusizov:	2,442,	or 2.55%.

6. (U) As of October 24, the CEC had accredited 92 observers from foreign states and international organizations, including 43 from OSCE/ODIHR, 12 from IFES, and 37 from the CIS.

Election Campaign Begins

7. (U) The election campaign officially began on October 25 and will last through December 2. President Nazarbayev kicked off his campaign by opening 208 "Public Reception Offices" in every oblast, city, and district of the country. Citizens can visit the offices to register complaints and requests; according to a Khabar report, some of the first visitors to the Astana office requested new apartments. Nazarbayev's campaign staff have also organized a series of public events in Astana, Semipalatinsk, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Taraz, and Shymkent. More than 6000 people reportedly attended the Ust-Kamenogorsk

rally despite bad weather. Over 30,000 reportedly attended the Shymkent rally, which had the theme "Only

Nazarbayev Can Make Kazakhstan a Leading Country of the World." A concert was held in Almaty on October 26 with the participation of various Kazakhstani celebrities. Finally, the pro-government Kaisar youth movement organized parade of over 40 cars and buses decorated with Kazakhstani and campaign flags through the streets of Almaty on October 25.

18. (U) On October 25, Zharmakhan Tuyakbay held an event in Almaty to present his program of political, economic and social reforms called "To Decent Life through Justice." The main political points of the program include a drastic cut of the president's powers (including the nomination of the prime minister, the appointment of ministers upon consent of Parliament, the right to object to legislative acts of Parliament, the right to supervise international policy, defense and security issues and the right to grant citizenship and political asylum). Legislative power will belong only to parliament. Akims of all levels will be directly elected. In addition, Tuyakbay outlined his future cabinet of ministers. He named Bulat Abilov, Oraz Zhandosov, and Galymzhan Zhakiyanov as candidates for Prime Minister. Communist leader Serikbolsyn Abdildin will be responsible for constitutional reform; Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly, national security; Tulegen Zhukeyev, foreign policy; and first Kazakh cosmonaut Tokhtar Aubakirov, defense.

19. (SBU) The press has commented on the fact that both Nazarbayev and Tuyakbay have chosen yellow as their symbol. Khabar TV ran a story claiming that the opposition "stole" the yellow color from Nazarbayev. Tuyakbay has said that "somebody else wants to hide himself under yellow banners." In a meeting with USOSCE Ambassador Finley, Baimenov noted half-jokingly that for Kazakhstanis yellow represents China; his campaign colors are red, white, and blue.

110. (U) Baimenov has so far had a lower profile than Nazarbayev and Tuyakbay. At an October 26 press conference in Almaty, the Association of Maslikhat Deputies announced its decision to support Baimenov. (Note: The majority of Maslikhat deputies are affiliated with pro-presidential parties. End note.)

Nazarbayev Relatives Threaten Legal Action

111. (SBU) First daughter Dariga Nazarbayeva issued a statement through Interfax on October 27 saying that President Nazarbayev's close relatives will take legal action against anyone who defames them in the press. "We reserve the right to appeal to various courts, including the international court, over each case of slander. We reserve the right to use consultations and other services of lawyers - both in our country and abroad. We intend to use the right to defend our honor and dignity as much as possible." The statement continues, "We, the close relatives of the incumbent president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, declare that we will resolutely and firmly suppress all attempts to use our names, circumstances of our private lives, business, administrative and public activities to create and circulate politically-tinted myths directly or indirectly discrediting the head of state and damaging the country's reputation." (Note: The reference to action outside of Kazakhstan may be linked to questions posed by U.S. reporters during Secretary Rice's October 12-13 visit to Astana. End note.)

Tuyakbay's Campaign Literature Burns

112. (U) On October 26, a truck carrying 700,000 copies of Tuyakbay's campaign literature burned on the way to Ust-Kamenogorsk and Semipalatinsk, near Lake Sasykkol in Almaty Oblast. The circumstances of the incident are murky. According to one report, the driver claimed the truck caught on fire suddenly. He tried but was unable to extinguish the fire, which destroyed copies of Tuyakbay's campaign program, his biography, and other booklets. The Interior Ministry issued a statement saying that the truck

burned as the result of a traffic accident, however.

Opposition Activist Receives Jail Sentence

113. (U) On October 26, FJK activist Marzhan Aspandiyarova

was taken to Almaty Administrative Court and charged with an administrative violation for participating in the October 8 event for which Tulen Tokhtasynov and others were also prosecuted (reftel). The court sentenced Aspandiyarova to a 10 day jail term, despite the fact that she was not an organizer of the event and the five other opposition activists were only fined. On appeal, the City Court of Almaty on October 27 reduced the sentence to 24 hours. Aspandiyarova, who had declared a hunger strike and was being held in pre-trial detention with prostitutes, was released the same day.

14. (SBU) According to opposition activist Petr Svoik, the court dealt harshly with Aspandiyarova for two reasons. First, she had annoyed Almaty City Akim Imangali Tasmagambetov by creating a committee called "Let's Protect our Home" to protest the demolition of homes in Almaty. The committee unites homeless people and those whose homes are slated for demolition according to the Almaty redevelopment plan. "The authorities are evicting people from their homes to build new restaurants and casinos," Svoik said. (Note: After protesting at Tasmagambetov's office two months ago, 15 committee members, including Aspandiyarova, were arrested. The following day Aspandiyarova was hospitalized with a concussion allegedly resulting from police action. End note.) Secondly, according to Svoik, Aspandiyarova is a smart member of Tuyakbay's campaign team. She has been traveling the country to train local coordinators. The arrest could "knock her out" of the campaign. (Comment: The protest movement has clearly touched a nerve. Demonstrations about the expropriation and demolition of private homes have brought small but vocally angry groups of people into the streets of Almaty over the past few months, a rare occurrence in Kazakhstan. End comment.)

Second Seizure of Svoboda Slova

15. (U) Early on October 26, the Medeu district police in Almaty again seized the opposition "Svoboda Slova" newspaper (reftel). The print run was 30,000 copies this time. Later the same morning, however, a representative of the district police visited the offices of FJK and announced that the seizure had been a mistake. The representative apologized for the seizure and asked the newspaper editor to retrieve the print run from the district police office.

16. (U) Gulzhan Yergaliyeva, the editor-in-chief of Svoboda Slova, speculated publicly that the second seizure was prompted by an article entitled "How Aliya Nazarbayeva does her business." The article reported that a company owned by the president's daughter was causing the "Alautransgas-Vostok" JSC to go bankrupt. Yergaliyeva claimed the seizure was evidence that the authorities were using the fact that opposition papers were now printed at a printing house owned by a Nazarbayev relative to gain early access to each edition.

Warnings against Contact with Foreigners

17. (SBU) It appears that in at least three oblasts, authorities have issued a warning to avoid or monitor contact with foreigners in advance of the presidential elections. In a western oblast, regional authorities have ordered that an English speaking faculty member or local official must supervise classes taught by a Peace Corps Volunteer (protect). The rector of a university in an eastern city asked a PCV to leave the school due to a warning from local authorities to avoid contact with foreigners. The rector relented when shown a letter sent by Peace Corps headquarters to all supervisors of volunteers stating that PCVs are not allowed to participate in any election-related activities. In a southern oblast, several schools refused to meeting with

Peace Corps staff to discuss placement of future PCVs due to the elections and a warning to avoid contact with foreigners.

ORDWAY

NNNN